

Amendments to the Specification:

Please amend the paragraph beginning on line 5 of page 3 as follows:

FIG. 3 is an enlarged partial side view of a hidden fastener disposed between two adjacent floor boards of a deck, particularly illustrating the manner in which a pair of ~~protrusions~~ projections of the fastener forms a substantially complementary mating relationship with grooves formed in the sides of the adjacent floor boards;

Please amend the paragraph beginning on line 7 of page 4 as follows:

Referring to FIG. 3, each side of each board 14 is similarly configured to include a longitudinal groove 22 defined between an upper lip 24 and a lower lip 26. Each fastener 20 includes a broad head 28, a narrowed mid-section 30, and a flared base 32. Broad head 28 includes a pair of similarly configured projections 34,36. As shown in FIG. 3, broad head 28 is received between adjacent boards 14 in a manner such that each projection 34,36 is received in a respective groove 22 in a substantially complementary fashion. As used herein, the term "complementary fashion" shall denote a manner of interfitting two components wherein a projection of one component substantially fills the void of another component (i.e., fills at least 60 percent of the void in the other component). Preferably, each projection 34,36 fills at least 75 percent of a respective groove 22 in a respective board 14, more preferably projections 34,36 fill at least 85 percent of a respective groove 22, and most preferably projections 34,36 at least 95 percent of a respective groove 22. The complementary

relationship between ~~protrusions~~ projections 34,36 and grooves 22 inhibits shifting of boards 14 relative to fastener 20.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on line 21 of page 4 as follows:

Referring to FIGS. 3 and 4, upper and lower lips 24,26 of board 14 present opposite inwardly facing surfaces ~~34,36~~ 40,42 which define at least a portion of groove 22. As shown in FIG.3, when ~~protrusion~~ projection 34 is received in groove 22, ~~protrusion~~ projection 34 is received between and contacts both inwardly facing surfaces ~~34,36~~ 40,42. This contact between ~~protrusion~~ projection 34 and surfaces ~~34,36~~ 40,42 prevents upward or downward movement of board 14 relative to fastener 20. It is preferred for the distance between surface ~~34~~ 40 and surface ~~36~~ 42 (i.e., the width of groove 22) to be in the range of from about 0.05 to about 0.5 inches, more preferably from about 0.1 to about 0.3 inches, and most preferably from 0.15 to 0.25 inches. Referring again to FIG. 4, groove 22 also includes an inner-most surface ~~38~~ 44 which represents the deepest portion of groove 22. It is preferred for upper lip 24 to extend further from inner-most surface ~~38~~ 44 than lower lip 26. More preferably, upper lip 24 extends at least about ten percent further from inner-most surface ~~38~~ 44 than lower lip 26, still more preferably at least about twenty percent further, and most preferably at least thirty percent further. As shown in FIG. 4, this configuration allows broad head 28 of fastener 20 to be received between boards 14 while maintaining a minimal gap 18 between the upper lips 24 of boards 14, thereby substantially hiding fastener 20 under upper lips 24. Further, this configuration allows for the use of a fastener 20 having a flared base 32, which

permits the fastener to stand up on the joist 12 without additional external support.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on line 25 of page 5 as follows:

Referring to FIGS. 4 and 5, it is particularly preferred for the thickness (E) of lower lip 26 to be slightly greater than the height (F) of ~~protrusions~~ projections 34,36. Preferably, the thickness (E) of lower lip 26 is at least about one percent greater than the height (F) of ~~protrusions~~ projections 34,36, more preferably at least about two percent greater, and most preferably at least five percent greater. Having the thickness (E) of lower lip 26 greater than the height (F) of ~~protrusions~~ projections 34,36 ensures that when projections 34,36 of fastener 30 are inserted into a respective groove 22 of a respective board 14, projections 34,36 exert a downward holding force on lower lip 26 of board 14. This downward holding force exerted by projections 34,36 on lower lip 26 inhibits upward movement of board 14 relative to fastener 20 and joist 12. Preferably, fastener 20 is made of a resilient material that allows projections 34,36 to be elastically flexed when projections 34,36 are inserted into a respective groove 22. The flexure of projections 34,36 can then exert and maintain the downward holding force on lower lip 26. Preferably, fastener 20 is formed of a resilient synthetic resin material such as, for example, polypropylene. It is also possible that having a thickness (E) of lower lip 26 greater than the height (F) of ~~protrusions~~ projections 34, 36 can cause a staple 40 (shown in FIG.3) to pull slightly out of joist 12 when projections 34, 36 of fastener 30 are inserted into a respective groove 22 of a respective board 14. This "pulling-out" of staple 40 should not cause staple 40 to work loose over time due to the

tendency of staples to splay and wander as they penetrate wood.